

**Economic Commission for Europe**

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

**Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards**

**Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**

**Sixty-sixth session**

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**Sustainable Development Goal 12 and sustainable  
practices: Food loss related to the use of standards**

**Discussion and comments on the Code of Good Practice  
and Recommendations on how to reduce waste in  
trading fruits and vegetables**

The following informal document contains the discussions and comments (highlighted in italics) among the members of the Working Group (Belgium, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden), on the Code of Good Practice and on recommendations on how to reduce waste in trading fruits and vegetables.

## **A Code of Good Practise and a Recommendation Paper on how to reduce waste in trading fruit and vegetables**

**Note from the delegation from Sweden (Rapporteur):** *Based on the very good comments received, it was possible to establish an excellent set of recommendations on how to reduce waste in fruit and vegetables. This paper, therefore, would serve as the recommendation paper. It should be further elaborated to be instructive and a good hands on tool.*

*A Code of Good Practise, should be a limited number of commitments that actors along the distribution chain, from farm to retail, can commit themselves to reduce waste. These commitments should also be part of the recommendation paper. To start with, it might be that agreement can only be found on quite a limited number of commitments but with time, further inclusions might be made. Below are all the recommendations received. A first proposal for a Code of Good Practise is presented in a separate paper.*

### **Production planning**

How to make a proper planning of production – simple examples for setting the production plan

**The delegation from Slovakia** suggested that it might be interesting to include the planning cycle of the vegetables production - 4-5 years cycle and add an explanation why it is so important.

**The delegation from Sweden** noted that the working group had agreed not to include measures during production and set a limit.

Plan production in time, volume and quality to expected market demand

- Ensuring that production is planned and adjusted to demand, particularly in terms of quality and quantity (**Belgium**)
  - Examples:
    - Extending the season , and avoiding peak productions
    - Choosing varieties that are wanted or demanded by the market
    - Choosing varieties that are less prone to quality issues
    - Crop diversification
    - Rotation schemes
    - Develop crop estimation tools
    - Use market intelligence to know market trends, seasonality
    - Extend shelf life by closing the cold chain, fast cooling after harvest
    - On farm support
      - Investments on farm in proper equipment
      - Training
      - Training in handling fruit during harvest
    - Training in grading fruit and vegetables according to standards
    - Crisis prevention
      - Hail nets

### **Harvest**

Use harvest methods that have as little impact on product quality as possible

Avoid harvesting sensitive products in wet weather conditions

**Comment from the delegation from Belgium:** *List of sensitive products?*

- Training farmers and harvesters (**Belgium**)
- Using correct bins or boxes that reduce damage to the produce (**Belgium**)

## Post harvest treatment

No ethylene treatment on citrus as it does not change maturity Moved by Slovakia

The delegation from Spain proposed the deletion of this sentence and noted that ethylene treatment is used on citrus fruit in order to change the colour of the fruit. In addition this paper should focus on the harvest of all fruits and vegetables and not only citrus.

The delegation from Sweden emphasized that the problem is that it causes skin damage and reduces shelf life without affecting the eating quality. If consumers could be taught not to require fully coloured fruit it would also reduce cost for producers and packers in addition to reducing waste.

Harvest cooling – with respect to product sensitivity, optimal temperature and outdoor temperature Moved by Slovakia

- Research for new cooling techniques and optimal conditions (Belgium)
- Centrally managed up to date infrastructure (Belgium)
- ▶ management and investment in storage and cooling (Belgium)
  - professional management and follow up of cooling and storage
  - less risk for failure
  - lower cost and more state of the art equipment
- ▶ packaging products (Belgium)
  - protect the produce
  - prolong the shelf life
  - introduce reusable packaging
- ▶ Research on: (Belgium)
  - New varieties
  - Improve growing techniques
  - Storage conditions
  - Shelf life
  - New packaging materials
  - Soil and tissue analysis

## Handling and distribution

Improve handling technologies – use of right methods of handling – sorting, packing etc. (Slovakia)

Improve logistics to limit distribution time as much as possible

Apply an unbroken cool chain in optimal temperatures

## Trading

Do not cancel or change orders less than x days prior to planned departure of products from packer/producer

The delegation from Slovakia asked how this would be achieved, given that this was a trade issue and producers could not influence this.

The delegation from Sweden noted that a Code of Good Practise was a set of "rules" that actors along the trade commit to.

Do not place orders of products before their horticultural maturity

The delegation from Slovakia reminded that not all of the products must be harvested at botanical maturity, and asked whether the term "botanical maturity" is the same as "horticultural maturity".

The delegation from Sweden responded that they were not the same, and that horticultural maturity was the correct stage for consumption. She noted the difficulty of defining this correctly. However, it was important to

avoid getting products harvested at a stage when they cannot reach a good eating quality. The delegation from Sweden would try to find a better wording for it.

Avoid specifications that will require unnecessary trimming

The delegation from Slovakia noted the repetition of the term “horticultural maturity”. She added that trimming was a specification by trade and not growers and that if trade wanted to have trimmed products - they would do it.

The delegation from Sweden noted that this aims at the buyers, not growers, and added that if they could make the buyers understand that this kind of specification increased waste – they could reduce waste.

- Or finding outlets for the discarded parts for example leaves (Belgium)
  - o Processing
  - o New products, drying...etc
  - o Extracting useable molecules from the residues
    - Probably more research needed

Plan an outlet for products of all qualities Moved by Slovakia

- Grading and sorting produce into different fractions can help to find outlet in different markets for different fractions (Belgium)
- Using market intelligence (Belgium)
- Explored new markets (Belgium)
  - Help from policy needed to open new markets
  - Support with promotion campaigns

## Wholesale level

Rejections/ Claims – must be

- made no later than three hours after arrival
- based on the sampling procedure specified by the OECD
- followed by control protocol setting out reason and percentage of non-conformity products

Climate zones

Avoid campaigns that (Belgium)

The delegation from Belgium noted that it was not possible to avoid all campaigns, but it could be possible to avoid certain types of campaigns.

The delegation from Spain commented that this was difficult to achieve because campaigns are important for companies. Campaigns remind consumers what fruit is in season and help to sell products. She suggested focusing on a Code of Good Practise in Campaigns in order to achieve the goal of reducing waste and preventing consumers to buy more than they can eat.

The delegation from Sweden noted that their industry says that campaigns aiming at the wholesale level make a) producers harvest products that are not of optimal maturity in order to fill the required volumes and b) wholesalers to buy large volumes that tend to get a bit old before they are sold. On the other hand, campaigns that RESPOND to a need, for example a warm period that has given a large volume a certain week, are positive but then need to be coordinated with a promotion to increase consumer demand.

- that invite consumers to buy more than they need
- that puts the negative price burden on the farmer

## Retail level

Improved sales predictions and more frequent deliveries reduce the need for buffer stocks

***The delegation from Slovakia** noted that it would be interesting to have calculations on what was cheaper: frequent deliveries or wasted products because of perishability. The most perfect recommendation made won't be used if this increased the cost.*

***The delegation from Sweden** expressed agreement with this and the need for further discussions also with the industry.*

Rejections/ Claims – must be

- made no later than three hours after arrival at retail
- based on the sampling procedure specified by the OECD
- followed by a control protocol setting out reason and percentage of non-conformity products

Skip campaigns – a stable volume and price decreases waste and in particular campaigns encouraging consumers to buy more than they can eat

***The delegation from Spain** expressed her belief that this was difficult to achieve because campaigns were important for companies. Campaigns reminded consumers what fruit was in season and helped to sell products. It may be better to focus on a Code of Good Practise in Campaigns in order to achieve the goal of reducing waste and preventing consumers to buy more than they can eat.*

***The delegation from Sweden** expressed her full agreement with Spain's comments.*

Sell also Category II products and inform consumers that their eating quality is not inferior to those of Category I

***The delegation from Slovakia** informed that this is the usual practise in Central Europe - Cat II was sold regularly.*

***The delegation from Belgium** noted that this might be controversial. First, retail cannot be obliged to sell class 2 and secondly class 2 obtains lower prices and thus decreases the income of the farmer. Thirdly, if a consumer buys class 2, the consumer will no longer buy class I.*

Avoid loose presentation of large volumes

Correct temperature for each product

***The delegation from Belgium** added that this applied for all links in the chain.*

Do not require products before harvest maturity

Find ways to use or sell damaged or suboptimal products f.ex.

- Sell as cooking products
- Reduce the price
- Use in smoothies salads etc.
- Give to charity

#### **Comments from Belgium:**

In Belgium a code of conduct for fair procurement of food was developed with some NGOs. It is a voluntary scheme but almost every retailer is committed to it.

Corner stone of this code:

- A clear engagement of the top management of the companies
- A code of conduct for suppliers that matters
- Anchoring sustainability ambitions in the KPIs of the company and of buyers
- A fair price for all player throughout the chain
- Develop equal sustainable long-term relationships with suppliers
- Provide measuring instruments
- Communicating sustainability performance of products to customers
- Being transparent and providing reliable information

Don't be afraid to experiment and innovate in the field of fair and sustainable purchasing

A few more ideas:

- ▶ Processing into new products and for new social destinations (aid of government)
    - Innovative start ups already created for processing
      - ✗ Into high value products
      - ✗ Longer expiration date → to tackle food poverty
  - ▶ Producer organisations coordinating to collect flows from farmers and distribute them for human purposes but also collect residues
  - ▶ Initiatives to prevent non-harvesting
  - ▶ Elaborate the analysis: tailor made solutions for every product
  - ▶ Debate on visual characteristics and intrinsic quality
    - Remove the fuse from the gunpowder
  - ▶ Yearly reports and monitoring
  - ▶ monitoring
    - Zero measurement of food residues and food losses
    - results for the whole supply chain + data for every link
    - structural data collection
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